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ABSTRACT

A joint masters degree program in special education administration was developed through collaboration among Gallaudet University (Washington, D.C.), Plymouth State College (New Hampshire), and Keene State College (New Hampshire). The program was established in 1990 to meet the needs of special educators in rural areas of New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont. Discussions with potential graduate students resulted in the identification of training needs in different areas of special education and administration. As a result, a summer program of study was established and held at Plymouth State College. Prompted by student discussions of the need for an even more advanced program, members of a joint advisory committee examined the training needs of current holders of master's degrees serving as directors of special education and master teachers. In an effort to expand the program for this potential market, data were analyzed from course evaluations, meetings with special education directors and teachers, and a needs assessment administered to special education directors and parents. Plymouth State College was awarded a state grant to support a series of summer leadership training institutes and to design a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study program (CAGS) in educational leadership. Efforts are currently directed toward designing a course of study, developing a market plan, writing proposals, and obtaining final approval for the new CAGS program. (LP)

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Special Education Administrator Training: Meeting Market
Needs Through Collaboration in Northern New England

Purpose of Presentation

Until recently, educational administrator training programs with a focus on special education were not offered by faculty at colleges and universities in Northern New England (e.g., New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont). In June, 1990, though, the Joint Master's Degree Program in Special Education Administration was established by a coalition of Gallaudet University from Washington, D.C., Plymouth State College and Keene State College (both members of the University of New Hampshire System).

The initial intent of the faculty in this program was to provide basic leadership training in special education as a response to needs espoused by local school district directors of special education and special education teachers. The participation of Gallaudet University in this endeavor was to assure a concentration on sensory disabilities such as deafness and blindness (areas of study in rural New England, and elsewhere, for which there is limited access, knowledge, and expertise) and on special education administration topics.

Our intended purpose in this paper is to discuss the process of establishing a new program based upon marketing data and to tell how marketing and course evaluation data as well as other factors coalesced to suggest that the new master's degree program needed to be expanded to meet more accurately the training needs of current holders of master's degrees presently serving as directors of special education, school building coordinators of special education, and master teachers. It, further, is our purpose to describe the process of planning and consultation used by program faculty with local directors of special education in New Hampshire and Maine in order to forge an advanced set of training experiences. The intent of this multi-state collaboration has been (and continues to be) to share knowledge about administrator training needs and positive leadership practices.

The result of all of this activity, including the participation of New Hampshire's Director of Special Education in implementing a broader based program planning and training process, is for state leadership and local leadership to be more effective in meeting educational needs. To do this, in part, Plymouth State College was awarded a state grant to support a series of summer leadership training institutes and to design a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Study Program (CAGS) in Educational Leadership. One specialty area in the new CAGS effort will be special education and its fit with other areas of education

Rural Character of Northern New England

The unique aspect of this effort has been a focus on rural education and on addressing regional training needs that have been expressed by local school personnel in mostly very rural locales. The benefit for prospective students is the direct contact that program faculty have with practitioners and advocates who have to address the daily challenges brought about by the needs of children with disabilities and their families, special education, generally, school inclusion and other important changes in special education, and the rapidly changing demographics of schooling in rural locales.

New Hampshire, Maine, and Vermont are the northernmost states in the eastern part of the United States, and, together, form the region sometimes known as Northern New England which is at the beginning of the Appalachian Trail. There is a unique character to this region of the country as evidenced by its rugged terrain, including mountains, lakes, and the sea, the independence of the people, and the ability of these people to forge a way of life, a proud history, and a set of noble traditions and lore from the land and area in which they live. If anything, there is a calm appreciation by the people of Northern New England to that which is thought about by most other people as being small.

In New England, and especially in Northern New England, one understands (or comes to understand if one is from "away") the value of those resources that are close by. One understands how to use local and regional resources in order to do what one does better. This precept of New England life led to the original assessment by Plymouth State and Keene State faculty members of the needs of those people who wanted leadership and administrative training, rather than on relying on training needs that had been specified elsewhere such as in national reports (say from the National Association of State Directors of Special Education, the Council for Exceptional Children, and the U.S. Office of Special Education Programs), or in the national special education literature.

Original Training Needs and the Original Program

It was the perspective of the faculty of the three institutions to establish a program that was responsive to the needs expressed by potential graduate students in the marketplace. In discussions with members of the New Hampshire special education administrators professional group, training needs in a number of different areas of special education and administration were deemed to be needed. The course of study that was established in this mostly summers only program held at Plymouth State in Plymouth, New Hampshire consisted of:

See Attached Program of Study

At the end of the first summer, several students who were enrolled in the program discussed the idea of having an even more advanced program, a program in which students who held master's degrees in education could enroll. Their point was that another master's degree would not necessarily be an asset professionally in terms of their intellectual or professional advancement or increasing the salaries they were receiving. Further, they were not necessarily interested in getting a doctoral degree as their intent was on continuing to work in local school districts in administrative positions in which a doctorate was not required. And, the only doctoral program in education in New Hampshire (the home state of most of the students) was not really geared toward their interests, and the faculty in that program accepted very few students each year, most being from out-of-state.

Thinking and Understanding the "Market" in Higher Education

During the second, third, and fourth summers the members of the Joint Gallaudet, Plymouth State, and Keene State Program Advisory Committee (consisting of faculty from the three participating institutions, a student enrolled in the program, and a local director of special education) began to discuss the idea of the "Market" for the present program, and a means of determining the marketplace for a different, more advanced program. Further, the idea of thinking about the marketplace was to discover ways to "sell" the program to a critical mass of students that would assure dependable numbers of prospective students from one year to the next. There were two problems with the original program. First, there was low enrollment due to the poor economic situation in Northern New England. Second, the program, perhaps any program in higher education today, requires an active marketing effort to reach as many people as possible. Limited marketing strategies do not seem to be effective. For example, advertisements need to appear continuously in newspapers and professional journals, displays are required at conferences and meetings, the original target group for potential students needs to be expanded; in other words, time, money, and energy needs to be expended in order to offer a program that has a long life. Most importantly, though, academic offerings need to reflect the needs of those who are to be trained, as well as other groups of people who have a stake or share in professional development, for example, advocates, parents, etc. Given the knowledge gained through our errors and growth, we discussed different marketing possibilities.

At first, there was an attempt at arriving at a quick solution. Gallaudet faculty offer a Specialist Program in Educational Supervision. However, the logistics of having students from Northern New England enroll in the program and, then, have Gallaudet University Faculty who lead this program come to New Hampshire each Summer proved to be too difficult. Another, more lasting, solution, then, was sought. It was clear from all that had been learned that Plymouth State would take on lead responsibility for this effort in concert with these other constituent groups.

Three of the members of the Advisory Committee of the Joint Masters Degree Program contacted the New Hampshire Special Education Directors Association to find out the level of interest of members (and others) for a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies Program (CAGS) since there was keen interest expressed previously by some of the members for a CAGS program. At that point, then, in 1992, Plymouth Faculty contacted the State Department of Education to determine if there was an interest in providing some support for this kind of program. The State Director of Special Education expressed his support. Yet, the establishment of a program of studies and obtaining support from the appropriate state higher education organizations to ratify new degree programs takes time. An interim step was needed in order to: a) continue to obtain data about training needs from the market of special education directors, teachers, related service personnel, and others; and, b) firm-up that interest with training opportunities, a whetting of the appetite, in which the focus would be on current topics of importance in educational administration and special education.

"Hot" Topics and the State of Maine

Fortunately, the members of the special education directors association in Maine have had about 10 years of experience in working with the Maine Department of Education and its State Director of Special Education on assessing needs and in developing training programs. The Maine group is very active.

Due to Maine's proximity, these experiences were thought of as being beneficial to those in New Hampshire who were trying to develop the CAGS and other training programs. Invitations were obtained for several New Hampshire school district directors of special education and faculty members from Plymouth State to attend and participate in the Maine, 1993 summer training institute.

According to Harriman, Renew, Abramson, and Walls (1993, "Perspectives on Training Needs for Directors of Special Education," Presented at the 16th Annual TED Conference, Orlando) in years previous to this, the Maine directors of special education conducted their own assessment of training needs through the "Administrator Needs Assessment Profile (ANAP)." And, this past Fall, the ANAP was administered to local

special education directors in New Hampshire and to a group of parents from Maine and Massachusetts (an assessment of New Hampshire parents is now underway). Thirteen (13) special education task areas were identified and their degree of importance was specified by the respondents. These competency areas, or administrative task areas, and their degree of importance to each group are as follows:

SPED DIRECTORS

PARENTS

12	Community Relations	7
2	School Finance & Budgeting	12
11	Supervision & Evaluation of Personnel	4
6	Federal & State Civil Rights & Education Laws	1
7	Organization & Planning	9
4	Educational Leadership	5
10	Educational Philosophy & Theory	11
9	Effective Instruction	10
13	Curriculum Development	6
3	Staff Development	3
5	Teaching Exceptional Students	8
8	Learning & the Learning Process	2
1	Employment Equity	13

This data, combined with data from course evaluations, from meetings with special education directors, teachers, and others becomes, then, the focal point for the development of the CAGS Program. Thus, the "marketplace" has been listened to and the members of the marketplace are being respected.

Present Efforts

While the "marketplace" has spoken about what is needed in training and the kind of training program to provide, the task of designing the CAGS Program and other training activities has not been completed. Now, a group consisting of Plymouth State faculty members and local directors of special education, the Special Education Leadership Institute Advanced Degree Work Group, will be engaged for the next several months in designing a course of study, developing a marketing plan, writing proposals to elicit external financial support, and obtaining approvals in New Hampshire for the new CAGS Program.

Several exciting training options being planned. First, a concentration of study in special education is being developed to be a part of the Plymouth State master's degree program in educational administration. Second, a leadership institute will be held this summer with the theme being "Leadership: A Shared Vision." Third, a comprehensive professional development plan is being developed by the administrators with a focus on designing a state certification that can be fulfilled by completing the CAGS. The joint effort to serve the marketplace seems to be successful.

**GALLAUDET UNIVERSITY
KEENE STATE COLLEGE
PLYMOUTH STATE COLLEGE**

Master of Education Degree: Special Education Administration

PROGRAM OF STUDY

Philosophy and Education (ED 501)	3 credits	PSC
Research Design (ED 503)	3 credits	PSC
School Supervision (ED 562)	3 credits	PSC
Theories of Learning and Cognitive Development (ED 536)	3 credits	PSC
Organizational Leadership (EDEA 620)	3 credits	KSC
Curriculum Development (EDCI 604)	3 credits	KSC
School Law (EDEA 621)	3 credits	KSC
School Budgeting (EDEA 624)	2 credits	KSC
The Management of Writing for Administrators (ADM 796)	2 credits	GAL
Public Policy and the Handicapped (ADM 810)	3 credits	GAL
Issues in the Organization and Administration of Programs for Special Populations (ADM 821)	3 credits	GAL
Teacher Evaluation (ADM 858)	3 credits	GAL
Practica (home site, academic years)	3 credits	PSC/KSC/GAL
Approved Graduate Elective or Thesis Option	<u>3 credits</u>	
Total credits in program	40 credits*^#%	

*A student lacking recent coursework in special education may be required to take a 3 credit course Educational Programs for Exceptional Children. (SPED 600)

^All students without previous training in sign language will be required to take two 2 credit courses in American Sign Language. (SPED 285, 286)

#An additional practicum in the area of the school principalship will be required of those who wish certification in that area. (ED 507)

%Course substitutions, such as comparable courses taught on one of the three campuses, may be used with approval.

·Multicultural competencies are built into all coursework.